

In the claims:

Claims 1-8 and 10-22 (Cancelled)

Claim 9 (Currently amended): A method for screening potential drugs, ~~or for the detection of virulence,~~ wherein said method utilizes a peptide encoded by an operon, wherein said operon comprises a gene selected from the group consisting of *tatA*, *tatB*, *tatC*, *tatD*, and *tatE*, ~~*mdeG*, *ereC*, *reeG*, *yggN*, *eekI*, *iroD*, *iroC*, *iroE*, *mtd2*, and *msl* to *msl6*~~, obtainable from *E. coli* K1, or a homologue thereof in a Gram-negative bacterium, wherein said homologue has at least 30% homology at the amino acid or nucleotide level, or a functional fragment thereof.

Claim 23 (New): A method for screening a potential drug using a peptide, said method comprising:

contacting the peptide with the potential drug, wherein the peptide has the ability to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm; and

determining whether the potential drug inhibits the ability of the peptide to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm, wherein the peptide is obtainable from *E. coli* K1 and is encoded by an operon comprising a gene selected from the group consisting of *tatA*, *tatB*, *tatC*, and *tatE*, or a homologue or functional fragment of any of the foregoing, wherein the homologue is obtainable from a Gram-negative bacterium and has at least 30% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 24 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the homologue has at least 70% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 25 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the homologue has at least 80% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 26 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the homologue has at least 90% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 27 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the operon comprises the *tatB* gene.

Claim 28 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the peptide comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, and SEQ ID NO:15, or a homologue or functional fragment of any of the foregoing, wherein the homologue is obtainable from a Gram-negative bacterium and has at least 30% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 29 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the peptide comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:11, SEQ ID NO:12, SEQ ID NO:13, and SEQ ID NO:15.

Claim 30 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:12, or a homologue or functional fragment thereof, wherein the homologue is obtainable from a Gram-negative bacterium and has at least 30% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 31 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:12, or a homologue or functional fragment thereof, wherein the homologue is obtainable from a Gram-negative bacterium and has at least 70% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 32 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:12, or a homologue or functional fragment thereof, wherein the homologue is obtainable from a Gram-negative bacterium and has at least 80% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 33 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:12, or a homologue or functional fragment thereof, wherein the homologue is obtainable from a Gram-negative bacterium and has at least 90% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 34 (New): The method of claim 23, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:12.

Claim 35 (New): A method for screening a potential drug, said method comprising:
contacting a peptide with the potential drug, wherein the peptide has the ability to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm; and
determining whether the potential drug inhibits the ability of the peptide to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm, wherein the peptide is obtainable from *E. coli* K1 and is encoded by an operon comprising a gene selected from the group consisting of *tatA*, *tatB*, *tatC*, and *tatE*, or a homologue of any of the foregoing, wherein the homologue is obtainable from a Gram-negative bacterium and has at least 30% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 36 (New): A method for screening a potential drug, said method comprising:
contacting a peptide with the potential drug, wherein the peptide has the ability to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm; and
determining whether the potential drug inhibits the ability of the peptide to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm, wherein the peptide is obtainable from *E. coli* K1 and is encoded by an operon comprising a gene selected from the group consisting of *tatA*, *tatB*, *tatC*, and *tatE*, or a functional fragment of any of the foregoing.

Claim 37 (New): A method for screening a potential drug, said method comprising:
contacting a peptide with the potential drug, wherein the peptide has the ability to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm; and
determining whether the potential drug inhibits the ability of the peptide to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:12, or a homologue or functional fragment thereof, and wherein the homologue is obtainable from a Gram-negative bacterium and has at least 70% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 38 (New): A method for screening a potential drug, said method comprising:
contacting a peptide with the potential drug, wherein the peptide has the ability to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm; and
determining whether the potential drug inhibits the ability of the peptide to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:12, or a homologue thereof, and wherein the homologue is obtainable from a Gram-negative bacterium and has at least 70% homology at the nucleotide or amino acid level.

Claim 39 (New): A method for screening a potential drug, said method comprising:
contacting a peptide with the potential drug, wherein the peptide has the ability to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm; and
determining whether the potential drug inhibits the ability of the peptide to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:12, or a functional fragment thereof.

Claim 40 (New): A method for screening a potential drug, said method comprising:
contacting a peptide with the potential drug, wherein the peptide has the ability to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm; and

determining whether the potential drug inhibits the ability of the peptide to translocate a protein from the bacterial cytoplasm to the periplasm, wherein the peptide comprises the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:12.